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SONGS

FROM LEINSTER



BY

W. M. LETTS





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MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SONGS FROM LEINSTER

HALLOW-E'EN, AND POEMS OF  
THE WAR

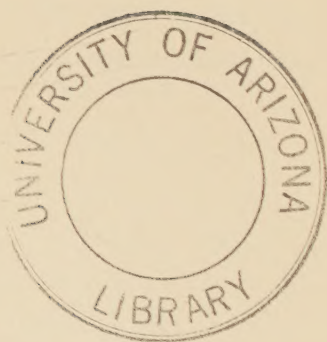
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# MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER

BY W. M. LETTS

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1926



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TO  
MY MOTHER

“Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety.”

64/65-P



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Some of these poems have appeared in the *Spectator*, the *Yale Review*, the *Forum*, the *Observer*, *Country Life*, the *Poetry Chap Book*, *Punch*, and the *Irish Statesman*.

## A GIRL OF THE GLENS

### TO HER CARELESS LOVER

I THOUGHT I had forgotten you and found peace at  
last ;

I had so busied myself with this and that,  
In making griddle cake and soda bread,  
In working linen on a little frame.  
And all the time I sang lest anyone  
Should pierce my thoughts with your name.

I thought I had forgotten you and grown so stead-  
fast

That I could walk the hills with a careless step  
And see the mountainy young lambs at play  
And laugh at them having left you behind :  
But as I stood above the Glen Imaal  
Your name was breathed by the wind.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

I thought I had forgotten you so that the spring  
time

Would never repeat your promises again,  
But all night long the corncrake shouted them, ;  
And the full moon remembered how we met,  
Even the white sweet hawthorn at the door  
Remembered. Could I forget?

True, I had not forgotten you. I shared my secret  
With whispering reeds round Lough Nahanagan.  
The cuckoo in the woods near Kevin's bed  
Called to us both the livelong day. The scent  
Of every whin bush held lost happiness :  
It was vain to seek content.

I would pay golden guineas to win forgetfulness.  
But no mountain lough would be deep enough  
To hide from you, nor Lugnaquilla's crests  
Be far enough away. The heather's breath  
Would bring you to my thoughts. I doubt myself  
I shall forget you in death.

## SAINT BRIGIT PASSES

I THOUGHT the winter lingered still  
So harsh and humoursome the wind,  
But Brigit of the blessed name  
Has passed and left the lambs behind.  
Their little voices made a song  
That drove the winter from my mind.

At Barnacullia all the whins  
Were bright to see as guinea gold,  
And in Kilternan primroses  
Peeped kindly at me from the mould ;  
Glencullen's larches showed young green  
That took the malice from the cold.

In Enniskerry I have watched  
How April's fingers touched the trees,  
And by the Dargle seen the ground  
Grow azure with anemones.  
The tiny wren upon the bough  
Singing rebuked my heart's unease.

## THE OLD WHISTLER ;

THERE came an old whistler along the dust-blown  
street

And oh ! he stirred my heart's core and moved  
my lagging feet

With something strange and something gay and  
something bitter-sweet.

Oh ! what did he in Dublin town who came from  
far away

From where the hills of Wicklow are folded round  
Lough Tay ?

What brought him to the huddled streets where  
money makes men grey ?

What magic in his fingers could stir my sullen  
mind

To hear the heather singing before a south-west  
wind,

When the chill air in the city is crabbed and  
unkind ?



*THE OLD WHISTLER*

What right had he to make me dream of half-  
forgotten things—

The crowing gorse upon the hill, the larks on  
upward wings,

The scent of gorse that is the breath of all my  
childhood's springs?

“The Rocky Road to Dublin,” the “Hunter’s Jig,”  
he played,

Till feet were young and dancing that had been  
old and staid,

That dusty-coated whistler, so tattered and so  
frayed.

“Here’s sixpence for your pains, old man, but leave  
my thoughts my own,

The grey thoughts of the city are better let alone,  
And a heart may yet be quiet though heavy as a  
stone.”

## THE CONNAUGHT RANGERS

I SAW the Connaught Rangers when they were passing by

On a Spring day, a good day, with gold rifts in the sky.

Themselves were marching steadily along the Liffey Quay,

And I see the young, proud look of them as if it was to-day !

The bright lads, the right lads ! I have them in my mind ;

With the green flags on their bayonets all fluttering in the wind.

A last look at old Ireland, a last good-bye maybe,  
'Then the grey sea, the wide sea, my grief upon the sea.

*THE CONNAUGHT RANGERS*

“And when will they come home?” said I, “when  
will they see once more

The dear blue hills of Wicklow, and Wexford’s dim  
grey shore?”

The brave lads of Ireland, no better lads you’ll find,  
With the green flags on their bayonets all flutter-  
ing in the wind.

Long years have passed since that Spring day—sad  
years for them and me;

Green graves there are in Serbia and in Gallipoli;  
And many who went by that day along the muddy  
street

Will never hear the roadway ring to their tri-  
umphant feet.

But when they march before Him, God’s welcome  
will be kind,

And the green flags on their bayonets will flutter  
in the wind.

## THE TRAVELLED ONE

“I’VE seen Cape Horn five times,” said he,

“’Twas in the days of sailing ships !”

His face was swarthy from the sea,

With steadfast eyes and merry lips.

“I dream of it sometimes at nights,

Now that I’m with the Irish Lights.”

“I’m in the Irish Lights,” said he,

“And taking stores around the coast,

’Tis quiet for a man like me

Who’s seen the world if he may boast,

Queer towns too far for you to know,

Lima and Monte Video.”

“The people in this land,” said he,

“Are well content with Wakes and Fairs,

But finer sights than them you’ll see

About the streets of Buenos Ayres,

*THE TRAVELLED ONE*

Or Valparaiso if you choose,  
Rio maybe or Santa Cruz."

"I'm in the Irish Lights," said he,

    "And roving ways are for the young.  
I've got my wife and family,

    And do my work and hold my tongue  
It's only in the days of spring  
My heart will go off wandering."

"I've no more stories now," said he,

    And gave my ear a friendly cuff.  
He put me down from off his knee

    And told me "Home is good enough."  
But in his wide, strange, dreaming eyes  
I saw big ships and foreign skies.

## THE SCUT

HE bested me last Wednesday was a week,  
And night and day  
I've turned it in my mind what I shall say  
If he should pass me in the Fair and speak,  
How well I'll know to answer him, the sneak.  
“ Good-day to you,” I'll say, “ old Tim McCann !  
You artful, scheming dealer of a man.  
Grown lean and grey in villyainy and sin.  
With that white whisker underneath your chin  
You're just the spit of my old billy goat,  
Barrin' you wear some scarecrow's cast-off coat.”

Ah ! yes, I'll tantalise him if I can,  
I've got such spleen and hatred to the man.  
I'll say—  
“ The like of you has travelled a long way  
You'd not leave sixpence underneath a stone,  
Nor spare a sparrow picking from a bone.

## THE SCUT

You've far less nature in your withered heart  
Than that poor mongrel dog behind your cart.  
You'd rob your mother an' she lying dead  
Of her own coffin's price beneath her head ! ”

All that and more I'll say to Tim McCann,  
The next Fair day I come across the man.  
And all the crowd  
Shall hear me, too, I'll speak to him so loud.  
They'll gather round and drive their eyes through  
him  
Until they see the naked soul of Tim  
As black as any crow.  
He'll turn and shake and wonder where he'll go  
I'll fault him so.  
The Hokey ! that I will and not forget.

But yet  
He passed me on the road to-day,  
The mean, small man, the weazened, grey-haired  
butt.  
“ Good-day,” said he, “ fine weather for the hay ! ”  
I near fell from my standing with surprise.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

It seemed that anger kept my mouth tight shut  
And blinded my two eyes.

“You scut!” was all I said to him, just that—  
“you SCUT.”

;



## THE DISPENSARY DOCTOR

(*To J. W. B.*)

NEW doctors in it ? Maybe so  
Their names are on the door.  
But the likes of our old doctor  
We'll surely see no more,—  
A fine endurable good man,  
The friend of all the poor.

He's served this town's dispensary  
Just pushing forty year,  
An' not a creature in the place  
But always got his ear.  
The christianable way he has  
Would drive away your fear.

He'll leave his bed on winter nights  
An' never grudge his rest,  
He laughs to hear you thanking him  
And turns it with a jest.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

The worst rapscallion of the lot  
He treats him with the best.

The most of us he's seen come home  
And stood the mothers' friend.  
He gives till he's an empty purse,  
And what he has he'll lend.  
And if so be you can't be cured  
He's with you till the end.

I'm thinking Heaven won't be full  
Till he's inside the door,  
The blessed saints will make his bed  
Upon a golden floor :  
But if they need the likes of him  
It's plain we need him more.

So when he goes as go he must,  
As flame burns out a wick,  
He'll take for comfort on his way  
The prayers of sad and sick.  
I think the Man Above will say  
"You're welcome home, avic."

## THE BREAKING POINT

OFTEN at night I've passed her in the street,  
Poor stunted Ellen in her beaded cape  
That once was velvet ; rusty, draggled crape  
Around the hat that crowned her grizzled head,  
And broken widespread boots upon her feet ;  
But "that's the lovely night " ; was all she said,  
Although the north wind brought the stinging rain.  
If she was chilled and sad she made no sign,  
For if you asked her of her health—" I'm fine,  
Now glory be to God ! I can't complain."

They say her man is just a porter shark,  
Who drinks the money if it comes his way.  
You'll see him propping walls up every day,  
Or with drink taken reeling home at night,  
For many times I've passed him in the dark  
And pitied her, poor woman, for her plight.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

All day she must contend with work to earn  
The scanty wage that goes to pay the rent  
And feed the children, yet no discontent  
Shadows the face her neighbours see return.

We thought she would lose heart when Josie left  
And joined the army, leaving her for good,  
Her eldest boy and best. But "now his food  
Will never fail, he'll grow a man," said she.  
And waved farewell, though with a heart bereft  
She went to work each morning steadfastly.  
The younger lads were idle, for a strike  
Had stopped the work they'd sought so long in  
vain.

"No matter, so," said she, "they'll work again.  
The Ganger sure can seldom get their like."

When 'Stasia died, the youngest of them all,  
She set her face and had no tears to shed.  
"Maybe the child is lucky being dead,"  
She muttered, and went out to seek the price  
Of coffin, grave, and decent funeral.  
She had to beg, her pride made sacrifice.

## *THE BREAKING POINT*

Sickness, it seemed, was ever at her door.  
But she had never time to heed her health.  
“Let them go sick,” she said, “that have the  
wealth,  
Keeping their beds comes hard upon the poor.”

Long on that sea of sorrow did she toss  
Like some forlorn and shabby little boat  
Storm beaten, drenched with spray, yet still afloat  
Until the day when Fortune for surprise  
Gave gold for cargo where there had been dross.  
Ellen was dazzled by the radiant guise  
Of Death who came to her while yet she slept,  
She woke to new life with an angel's kiss  
That bade her welcome to unending bliss.  
“’Tis joy that breaks my heart,” she said—and  
wept.

## OLD SISTER MARY GREGORY

OLD Sister Mary Gregory  
Goes down upon her knees,  
Calloused and creaky at the joints  
With life-long pieties.  
You'll hear her mutter at her prayers  
And catch her breath and wheeze.

Like some tried faithful servant  
That has her Master's ear,  
Old Sister Mary Gregory  
Insists that God shall hear.  
She has so much to say to Him  
She says it without fear.

For though a convent hid her youth,  
And she was no man's bride,  
And never heard a baby's feet  
Pit-patter at her side,

*OLD SISTER MARY GREGORY*

Yet she has children by the score  
And sends them far and wide.

She's sons that go across the sea,  
They write from far away.  
She's children sick and children sad,  
And children wild and gay.  
She tells their names each night to God  
Lest they forget to pray.

The Devil dreads a mother's heart  
So greatly will she dare ;  
So fierce she is to evil,  
So armed she is in prayer ;  
And Sister Mary Gregory  
Fights boldly for her care.

They disremember now and then  
The apple-faced old nun ;  
But still she holds them in her heart,  
Each daughter and each son,  
And where the Altar light burns red  
She counts them one by one.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

If she should die before them  
And win her golden store,  
She'll choose a Heavenly Mansion  
Well furnished for a score,  
And there they'll find her waiting  
Outside her open door.



## THE HURLEY PLAYER

“WHEN you are old,” she said, “grown old and  
grey . . .”

I laughed to hear her say it, till the cold,  
Strange thought came afterwards, you will be old  
Sometime and give your hurley stick away  
For someone else to play.

It seemed a foolish word, yet she spoke true,  
That you must be like other men and trail  
Your dragging feet and tell a twice-told tale,  
Rubbing dry wrinkled hands as old men do,  
And yet it will be you.

Young men will praise new heroes of the game,  
This one's endurance, that one's flying feet.  
How will they know how strong you were and  
fleet,  
You who were once a storm wind and a flame?  
They will forget your fame.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

They will not dream, these careless and uncouth,  
That you, who wag an old man's tedious tongue,  
Were once a splendour, tawny-haired and young.  
But I shall laugh at them who doubt the truth  
Of your immortal youth. ;

## THE DELPH SHOP

I WENT into the shop, a bead bag in my hand,  
I went to buy some delph,  
A new hat on my head. So elegant and grand  
I thought myself,  
Saying quite proudly, "Let me see your delph."

There came a Tinker woman, a kerchief round her  
head.

She came to look for delph.  
A baby in her shawl—I wonder was she wed—  
She held herself  
Careless and queenly, saying, "Show me delph."

I stood there in the shop and small I felt and  
mean

Among the shining delph

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Beside the Tinker girl, that tanned gold-headed  
queen.

On every shelf  
Her bold eyes lingered, saying,  
"I want delph."

;

## THE COMRADE

A LONG road before me,  
A long road behind,  
A harsh day and crabbèd,  
A humoursome wind.

No blackbird to sing me  
The breath of a song.  
My grief on the grey road  
So lonesome and long !

But there at the cross roads  
I happened to see  
A kindly companion  
To travel with me.

Colloguing together  
The miles hurried by,  
Till a wee rift of blue  
Flung hope to the sky.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Now God bless the burden  
That's shared with a friend,  
And God bless the long road  
With home at the end.

;

## FIRE OF STICKS. FIRE OF TURF

YOUR love was like a fire of sticks  
Or whin that kindles at a spark.  
It blazed so high it made  
A splendour in the dark.  
But if it burnt so merrily  
It died away as fast,  
And I was left with ashes  
To warm me at long last.

Oh ! like a fire of turf, my man,  
I prayed to God your love might be,  
As warm on winter nights  
And burning steadfastly.  
That if I'd think it dying out  
And raked the ash apart,  
I'd find the sod was glowing  
With fire at its heart.

## A DEDICATION

IF I had a little house  
    A white house on a hill,  
With lavender and rosemary  
    Beneath the window sill,  
The door should stand wide open  
    To people of good will.

So if you sought my welcome  
    Upon an Autumn night  
You'd smell the goodly turf smoke  
    And see the firelight,  
And two wax tapers ready  
    To make my table bright.

The kettle should be singing,  
    A white cloth fairly spread,  
With butter from the dun cow  
    And brown and soda bread,



## *A DEDICATION*

A little crock of honey  
From bees full heather fed.

There'd be no sound to startle  
Except the white owl's call,  
But a noise of tumbling water  
Beneath the old mill fall,  
A little stir of larches  
Beyond the garden wall.

Then you should draw your chair up  
Before my friendly fire,  
And watch me light the candles,  
Each flame a golden spire,  
And see the kind brown tea-pot  
Brew tea for your desire.

The homely feast partaken,  
The gay delph rinsed and dried,  
I'd leave the window open  
To evening starry-eyed,  
A little glowing window  
For lonely ones outside.

Then I would tell you stories  
Of haunted hill and glen,

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Of Thievish, Shee, and Pooka  
Who showed themselves to men,  
You'd ask me, as a child does,  
“ And so what happened then ? ”

A little while you'd listen,  
A little while I'd tell  
Old legends of the country,  
Of rath and holy well,  
And you should hearken wide-eyed  
Like one caught in a spell.

If I had a little house—  
But none have I,—so look !  
That you might share them with me  
These dreamland tales I took  
From firelight and moonlight  
And made for you this book.

## A PORK SHOP

It is Saturday morning.

The pork shop is full.

Women and little children

Wait patiently their turns,

Their faces eager and intent,

Seeing in a vision

The Sunday breakfast or the Sunday dinner—

For God's own gentle day

Means home and leisure time,

Fathers and brothers free from work

And something good to eat.

I find them beautiful

These grave, intent, and knowledgable faces

Of women planning meals for hungry men.

Pigs' trotters, sausages, or pork,

Or puddings white and black—

They ponder these things with a solemn look,

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

For these are vital, meaning more to men  
Than pictures. music, books.  
And we who sing our songs are less, far less  
Than they who keep this excellent, clean shop.  
The mistress of the pork shop, buxom, bland,  
Is like some wise. benignant deity.  
She knows us all, our means and what we buy,  
She seems to wish us well, to bless her wares  
With kindness, seeing in vision too  
Those Sunday tables spread with her good meat.  
Her surly husband has no dreams to fill  
His heart but money in the Bank—  
Money, more money. He has no idea  
Of his high office in this busy shop.  
His fat, jowled face, so heavy and morose,  
Seems like a malison  
Upon his sausages.  
But undismayed by him  
I mean to buy a pound of them  
And tripe to feed my dog.

## THE DONNYBROOK ROAD

ALL day

From Bray to Donnybrook,

From Donnybrook to Bray

The motor cars scurry.

The loud horns say—

“I’m in a hurry. Get out of my way!”

“I must get to Donnybrook.”

“I must get to Bray.”

What if an angel

Leaning from the sky

Blew the last trumpet for every ear,

And shouted, “Stop your engines, for judgment is nigh!”

Would anyone listen? Would anyone hear?

Would anyone trouble to change his gear?

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

“Did you hear thunder?”

That's what they'd say,  
Hurrying to Donnybrook,  
Scurrying to Bray.

;

## JOHN KELLY

It was among the cowslips  
I saw John Kelly stand,  
An old caubeen was on his head,  
He'd cowslips in his hand.  
He picked a big bunch,  
I picked one too,  
But his he laid upon my knee.  
Said he, "There's thim for you."  
Ah ! warm the sun was shining  
That day above Dundrum,  
The corncrakes all were shouting,  
The blackbirds whistling, "Come,"  
Clear was the Three-Rock,  
Misty the sea,  
That time I met John Kelly there  
When first he spoke to me.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

We stood among the cowslips,  
I heard the cuckoo call.  
John Kelly showed his cabin there  
Beyond the granite wall,  
A white-washed cottage  
Warm-thatched and small,  
And then he smiled and said good-bye,  
I smiled—and that was all.  
The scent of cowslips still brings back  
That day above Dundrum  
When corncrakes shouted in the grass,  
When blackbirds whistled, “Come.”  
Still I can see you  
There by the gate;  
John Kelly, you were five years old  
And I was twenty-eight.



## THE PEACOCK

ACROSS the terraces of grass  
The peacock screams, " Alas ! Alas ! "  
With head raised towards the Eastern sky  
He tears the silence with his cry.

For he has known an older day  
When Solomon in fine array  
Has scattered grain and laughed to see  
His strutting courtier's dignity.  
For Solomon and all his queens  
The peacock trailed his blues and greens,  
For Solomon so great and wise  
He flashed those lustrous, plumèd eyes.  
And now he mourns when he recalls  
The golden throne, the cedared walls,  
The Nubian slaves in silk attire  
Who brought him food at his desire ;

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

The little apes which tried in vain  
To snatch a feather from his train :  
The burning Eastern day, the shade  
By wide-flung cedar branches made.  
And once—how long ago it seems ;  
That golden day of peacock dreams !—  
The Queen of Sheba stood to gaze  
Upon his beauty and to praise  
The splendour of his outspread fan  
While he performed his slow pavane.  
And with her jewelled hands caressed  
The finer jewel of his breast.

## GUINEA FOWL

THE guinea fowl shout, "Go back ! Go back !

You had better go back than stray

Where the faeries dance round the apple-trees

And the meadow grass is gray

With dew

And you

Might just be caught and put in the pack

Of the Tinker man, for he's near the stack,

Hiding where the shadow is black.

So you'd better go back ! Go back ! Go  
back ! "

The speckledy hump-backed guinea fowl say,

"Go back, little boy, go back !

If you go to the fairy rath to play

When the moon shines overhead,

You'll vanish from sight and leave no track,

And your mother may weep, Alas ! Alack !

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Because you wouldn't go back, go back,  
As the wise old guinea fowl said."  
That's why they shout at the close of day,  
"Go back ! Go back ! Go back !"

;

## ON THE DEATH OF A MEERCAT

RIKKI, WHO DIED AT ANNA LIFFEY HOUSE, LUCAN

O TOLL the bell for Rikki, he is dead !  
His little paws are folded on his breast ;  
His soul is fled  
To some fair isle of meercats in the West  
Where he may rest.  
Bid the hound puppies wear a mournful mien,  
The housedogs lift their voices in a keen.  
Let Brother Raven ring the passing bell  
To number Rikki's years.  
Let Charles, the stable-cat, bind asphodel  
About his pink-lined ears.  
Let no presumptuous mouse with ribald squeak  
Profane his grave.  
But let the sunbeams make his bed less bleak  
With warmth he used to crave.  
And you who pass let fall the kindly tear  
For Rikki may be near.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Mayhap his spirit at the fall of night  
Peers with sharp eyes around the open door,  
And creeps into the hearthstone's friendly light,  
A darker shadow on the shadowed floor ;  
Standing erect he warms his furry chest,     ;  
Eyes bright with glee.    Speak softly lest  
His little ghost take sudden fright—  
A rush, a scurry . . . and his gentle sprite  
Come back no more.

## THE TWELVE PINS OF CONNAUGHT

THE Twelve Pins of Connaught  
They stand up in a row  
To catch the moon and starshine  
The sunset's fading glow ;  
And every god in Ireland  
Vowed thrice that he would win,  
Tho' he should pull for ever,  
A mountain for his pin.

The Twelve Pins of Connaught  
Were neither bought nor sold,  
Though one was made of silver  
And one of finest gold ;  
Though four were cut from emeralds  
And three from amethyst,  
And one was all of diamond  
That sparkled through the mist

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

The Twelve Pins of Connaught  
Are still the gods' desire,  
For one is mossy agate ;  
And one a great sapphire.  
But though the high gods pulled them,  
And pulled with all their might,  
The Twelve Pins stand in Connaught  
This day for man's delight.



## THE OLD MAYO WOMAN

AN old country woman  
The poorest of the poor,  
The years were upon her,  
Seventy and more ;

Her beauty had withered, her brown cheeks were  
lined,  
The bog lay about her, the dark hills behind.

No shoes and no stockings  
Upon her feet had she,  
A kerchief for headgear,  
A shawl to her knee ;  
A petticoat all patched, red against the bog,  
Her only companions an ass and a dog.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

The ass was well laden  
With the turf for the hearth,  
The dog walked before him ;  
To show him the path,  
The old woman followed, her face to the sun.  
Dreaming how she'd rest herself, the day's work done.

As I saw her standing  
With neither gem nor shoe,  
I thought of Blessed Mary,  
Working woman too ;  
In shawl and in kerchief, bare foot on the sod,  
Our Lady of Labour, the Mother of God.

## TO A MAY BABY

*(To Peter John Dobbs)*

To come at tulip time how wise !

Perhaps you will not now regret

The shining gardens, jewel set,

Of your first home in Paradise

Nor fret

Because you may not quite forget.

To come at swallow-time how wise !

When every bird has built a nest ;

Now you may fold your wings and rest

And watch this new world with surprise ;

A guest

For whom the earth has donned her best.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

To come when life is gay how wise !  
With lambs and every happy thing  
That frisks on foot or sports on wing, ;  
With daisies and with butterflies,  
But Spring  
Had nought so sweet as you to bring.

## THREE GIFTS

COURAGE. LOVE. FUN \*

*(To Peter John Dobbs)*

EACH day a beggar-woman at the portal  
Of God's high house, by urgent need emboldened,  
I ask three gifts for you, my well-beloved,  
Three gifts beyond the wealth of djinn or mortal.

Courage to stand now all the earth seems quaking,  
And wise men grow perplexed and kingdoms totter  
Now faith is sifted, old tradition tattered,  
A broken world in need of each man's making.

Love that shall find your kith in friend and  
stranger,  
Brother in man, and beast in saint and sinner,  
Cleanse you of grudge, or pride, or grievance,  
Bidding you seek Christ in an ass's manger.

\* George Wyndham's motto.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Fun ever quick to kindly speech and laughter,  
Swift with a jest the day your heart is breaking.  
Fun that shall cheer dull years and send you  
whistling

Clear-eyed and cool to meet the brave Hereafter.

With these you shall not need men's praise or pity,  
Defeat shall brace you, conquest make you humble,  
So you shall fight and march and sing till sunrise  
Lights up the walls of the Celestial City.

## HALLOW-E'EN

(THE ROSE-WALK, MOUNT MERRION)

IF you should be abroad to-night  
And choose the rose-walk for delight,  
Who knows but you may chance to meet  
Her ladyship on silent feet—  
A swish of skirts, a scent of musk,  
A flitting shadow in the dusk.

She will not stir the fallen leaves,  
Nor brush you with her silken sleeves ;  
Her little buckled shoes will pass  
And never bend one blade of grass ;  
Only a gleam of powdered hair  
Will show my lady pacing there.

What dreams she dreamt here long ago,  
What hopes sped with her to and fro,

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

What wistful memories, what tears,  
In her withdrawn and widowed years,  
Perhaps the last red rose could tell, ;  
But roses keep their secret well.

Each Hallow-E'en she flits again  
By starlight through her old domain,  
A happy phantom come to see  
The gardens of her memory.  
To-night we are but trespassers ;  
The rose-walk and its past are hers.



## THE REBEL

ONE night I dreamt I saw a man  
Standing before God's shining throne,  
A very angry little man,  
And God and he were all alone.  
God's knee seemed like a mountain wall,  
Up which the man, fly-like, might crawl.  
But there he stood and shook his fists  
And cursed the Universal plan.  
I saw his impotent small wrists,  
His eyes too furious for fear ;  
He did not bow his head nor kneel ;  
He shouted loud that God might hear.  
God might have crushed him with His heel,  
Instead He bent a listening ear.

Then he began  
That speck of dust, that fly-like man,

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

To tell his grievances to God  
Who never moved by stir nor nod.  
Just so an insect might have raved ;  
Defiance at Mount Everest,  
Snow-peaked, cloud-turbaned at the crest.  
He said that he had never craved  
Mercy of God, but just a sign  
That there was method and design,  
A scheme benign,  
Hidden within this tangled skein  
Of futile effort, useless pain ;  
Of good endeavour turned to ill,  
Of evil crowned and potent still.

He asked what master would employ  
A man who made so poor a toy,  
And what mechanic but would not  
Have seen the flaws and scrapped the lot.  
And yet with sob and shriek and curse  
The world rolls on from bad to worse.  
Was this divine—to make from dust  
A creature torn by every lust,  
But fretted by the sight of stars  
Shining beyond his prison bars ;

## *THE REBEL*

Swine, racked by dreams of holy things,  
Apes with the rudiments of wings ?  
Was God, he clamoured, still content  
And heedless of the innocent  
Whose blood and tears fall day by day  
On every tyrant's rose-strewn way  
While God looks down—Omnipotent ?

He laughed at his own irony,  
That little man ! I held my breath.  
I knew some instant flaming death  
Must end his panting blasphemy.  
But this I saw—God stretched His hand  
Down to the man that he might stand  
Upon the palm. Poised there in space  
He met his Maker face to face  
And heard God's whisper without fear.  
I could not hear  
The words that passed, but Heaven's grace  
Clothed that small man. God took his part  
Because his angry rebel's heart  
Had yearned for justice, sought for good,  
And turned in wrath from compromise ;

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

When man condemned, God understood  
A soul who seeks a Paradise  
Where every wrong shall be redressed ; ;  
And better that all good—the best  
To him whose just soul had defied  
An unjust God—God justified.

## THE ROAD THAT GOES WEST

“And when the world is hushed and the fever of life over  
and our work done, then in Thy Mercy give us a safe lodging  
and a quiet rest.”

WHEN from this world my way lies to the west,  
Footsore and muddy, wounded, shattered, spent,  
Death being past I shall but crave a rest,  
A kindly hostel, welcome and content.

Some hope for golden streets and gates of pearl,  
And some for haloes and a sea of glass,  
May God forgive me for a thankless churl—  
I'd rather have one field of daisied grass.

I am too battle-stained for mansions fine,  
Too tired for the flutes and minstrelsy,  
A Paradise remote and green be mine,  
A cottage there were good enough for me.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

I'd choose to reach it when the evening sun  
Sends level beams among the elm-trees' boles,  
When rooks and daws fly home and labour's done,  
And all the wayside flowers wear aureoles.

Later, the gentle twilight sweet with stocks,  
A flittering of bats against the sky,  
Dim orchard grass where dandelion clocks  
Tell fairy time to elves who wander by.

Gnarled boughs beneath the casement of my room,  
That white still room set far from strife and  
fear ;

The church owl hooting in his hallowed gloom,  
A sound of hurried waters at the weir ;

The house all hushed save when the night winds stir  
The cluster roses nodding at the pane,  
Or drowsy moths set soft grey wings awhirr  
About the walls, then sink to rest again.

How good to lie and dream with fast-shut eyes,  
Of every care and baulked desire bereft ;  
To take no heed of punishment or prize  
Or that bewildered toil-worn life I'd left !

*THE ROAD THAT GOES WEST*

Who knows, the Master of the House might stand  
At rising of the moon beside my bed  
And say, "Sleep on, sleep on," and lay His hand  
In benediction on my weary head.

## IMPERMANENCE

THESE lovely things I saw in flower,  
White-veiled and tall the woodland cherry trees,  
For carpet at their feet anemones  
All lovely for an hour.

This gladsome sight I saw, the tryst  
Of boy and girl beneath the hawthorn boughs ;  
To all eternity they pledged their vows,  
Yet these shall pass like mist.

This splendid scene I saw, the pride  
Of young brave men who marched with fife and  
drum,  
Certain, yet reckless of the pain to come.  
Who lives when these have died ?

The blossom drifts upon the sod,  
The lovers and the soldiers turn to dust,  
If beauty fade, love die and honour rust— ?  
O fool, leave that to God.



## NO NIGHT IN HEAVEN

No night in Heaven !—Ah ! he did not know,  
That worn old Eastern saint, the tender glow  
Of summer evenings in the happy West.

He had not seen the sunset smoulder low  
Behind the larches on the far hill's crest,  
Nor watched the rooks and daws fly home to rest

He had not known the scent of new-mown hay  
In dream-like fields about the close of day.  
Nor seen the hawthorns by the May moon's light.

He had not envied lovers as they stray  
About the dusty lanes, where, starry white,  
The dog rose throws her garlands for delight.

If he could know, as we, belovèd, know  
Twilight and harvest moon, he too would pray,  
“ Morning and noon are good but night is best—  
Maker of stars ! Oh ! give us back the night ! ”

## THE SICK-ROOM

WHY will they murmur at my door  
So low that I can scarcely hear,  
And yet so loud they catch the ear  
With some detached, exciting word ?  
And there I strain my ears but miss  
The clue, and so they buzz and hiss  
In hushed soft sibilants once more.  
I held my breath and never stirred  
Just now because the door-bell pealed  
And hasty feet ran through the hall.  
Who knows what news those sounds revealed ?  
I wish that I could hear it all,  
Or never know one word about  
The busy world that lies without.

Things that I've never seen before  
Have lately grown so very clear,

## THE SICK-ROOM

The stains and patches on the wall,  
That crack which from the corner here  
Looks like a woman in a shawl.  
Pictures and books and wash-hand stand  
All interest me as here I lie.  
I feel like some one come to buy  
These things a bargain second-hand.  
And then I turn my eyes to stare  
At flies that wander everywhere.  
It fills me somehow with surprise  
The world should be so full of flies.  
I'm half amused to see them crawl  
About the quilt and on my sheet.  
They pause and clean their tiny feet,  
Flies are particularly neat.  
For coat tails they have little wings,  
They rub their hands like some urbane  
Young counter-jumper who in vain  
Would make you buy his worthless things.  
But undepressed, for flies are clever,  
A snub to them is nought whatever ;  
They have a game they play with me,  
Tom Tiddler's ground upon my arm—  
When I get cross they hum with glee,

MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER

They dare me on to do them harm.  
And then they smile with their great eyes  
And buzz away on feckless wings,       ;  
For flies are really queens and kings  
And rule the world.—I never knew  
Before I took to bed—did you?  
The world was *quite* so full of flies

## CONVALESCENCE

I WOKE to hear a robin sing  
And summer raindrops pattering  
Upon the broad-leaved sycamore.  
The world will soon be fair again  
With that clear shining after rain ;  
A world grown fairer than before,  
Because my eyes were blind to see  
The loveliness in flower and tree ;  
Because my ears were deaf to catch  
The sound when God had raised the latch ;  
Because my sluggard heart was dumb  
To thank Him when I saw Him come.  
All that was very long ago,  
But I lay sick—and now I know.

## HANDS

I LIKE to think how wise God was when making  
man

Cunningly to devise what raises him a span  
Above the four-foot beast. His hands are subtle  
things :

There's wonder in the least of them. Claws, paws,  
or wings

Are good but lack God's sign, His own creative  
skill

That lurks in fingers fine, answering to the will  
And thought of him who sits, guiding his servants  
ten,

Obedient to his wits with tool, or brush, or pen.

The dearest of them all are babies' hands like  
flowers,

So pink and curled and small, yet with a strength  
like ours,

## HANDS

Learning to clutch and hold and serve the eager  
mind.

Good, too, a hand that's old, wrinkled and worn  
and kind,

Seamed with its honoured age : the labourer's,  
grimed with toil,

His palm a printed page to show it tilled the soil,  
Used mattock, plough, and spade, felled timber,  
tamed the earth,

Sowed seed, reaped sheaves, obeyed him willingly  
since birth.

How subtle and how wise the strong, fine hands of  
art !

A genius in them lies to stir and lift the heart :

In string and wood they wake the hidden melodies ;  
In graven stone they make great spires against the  
skies,

Lift Beauty from the sod and bring Olympus down,  
White goddess, bronzed god to dwell with churl  
and clown ;

Catch angels by the sleeve ; with palette, brush and  
paint.

Make faithless souls believe in seraph and in saint.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

But of all hands the best to me are yours, dear  
love,  
I've watched them lie at rest, careless of sheltering  
glove,  
And praised them that they were the slaves of your  
true mind,  
So strong, so swift to care for weak and sad ; so  
kind,  
There's healing in their touch, and gracious charity  
Lies in your handclasp. Such their gentleness to  
me  
That I would ask but this, death being overcome,  
Your hands to clasp my own, your hands to lead  
me home.



## TIN GODS

I HATE,—

Although my speech is mild and temperate,  
I hate with hidden and yet deep disgust  
The small tin gods that sit and prate  
About themselves the livelong day,  
Shouting like corncrakes, “Great, Great, Great  
We are the people. Bow to us !  
Let the old gods be swept away,  
We are the hierarchy of tin.  
The olden gods you loved of late,  
The golden gods are out of date.  
Greater than law we sit in state  
Singing of decadence and lust,  
We mock at righteousness and sin.”  
The small tin gods they prattle thus.

I hate them,  
Windy in the head,  
Who for the sake of some small art

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Disdain to sweat for daily bread,  
And live apart  
Upon their fellows' honest toil ;  
By desk and counter, mine and soil.  
Shaggy of head and slack of tie,  
They babble in the market-place,  
" Behold us, all ye passers-by,  
We rule the world by right and grace.  
The old-world gods are long since dead  
And we, the new gods, rule instead."

I hate them and the creed they teach,  
But being mild of look and speech  
I hide my hatred in my heart.

## DEIRDRE IN THE STREET

DEIRDRE is dead and all her beauty blown  
Like wind-swept petals underneath the thorn.  
If beauty dies, then beauty is new-born,  
And Deirdre met me in the street to-day,  
Her hair like blackbirds' breasts, her shadowed  
eyes

Like hazel-circled pools beneath grey skies.  
Proudly she walked as women from the hills,  
Her basket full of early daffodils.

Deirdre is dead and beauty, like a smoke,  
Passes its phantom way into the air.  
But other women are as young and fair.  
Here at my elbow with soft hurried speech  
She urged her wares. And in this dreary place  
I looked upon a princess face to face.  
Backed by a hoarding fierce with garish bills,  
Deirdre stood crying—"Buy the daffodils."

## A SONG FOR ANNA LIFFEY HOUSE

ANNA LIFFEY drowzes beside the shining weir,  
The merry river passes, singing all the day.  
The beeches bend to catch her. "Why must you  
go, my dear?"

You gleaming, lovely Liffey, so beryl-bright and  
clear."

But still they never hold her. She always slides  
away,

Singing, singing, singing as she turns the wheel,  
"God be with the miller, God be with the mill,  
God be with the people who have their bins to fill,  
And God be with the sorry folk who hunger for a  
meal."

Anna Liffey drowzes with windows open wide,  
Great beeches stand as sentries on guard at either  
side.

*A SONG FOR ANNA LIFFEY HOUSE*

The heron is watching where the shallows run,  
The kingfisher passes, a jewel in the sun.  
All day the river murmurs—"Peace within the hall,  
Peace upon the threshold, peace inside the house,  
Peace upon the sunning cat and on the busy  
mouse.  
Peace upon the garden and on the basking wall,  
The heavy-laden fruit trees, the low humming  
hives,  
Peace upon the barnyard, the red cock and his  
wives.  
That God may smile upon you here and give His  
peace to all."

## IN GOD'S POCKET

MARY MORIARTY, she met me at the door ;

“Troubles are like the crows,” she said,

“They travel by the score.

I wonder does the Man Above have patience with  
the poor,

Plucking at His sleeve all day,

Begging Him for more.”

“I was in God's pocket all the night,” said she,

“All the day I'm moidered with my care,

Rarin' childer, feedin' fowl, what way would I be,

But they fall asleep at last and I have time to  
spare

For telling God the way I am with my long  
family.”

## I MET A POET

I MET a poet

And I hated him.

He wore small whiskers like a Georgian buck,

A black sombrero for a hat.

He seemed to think that he was born elect,

That we should hang upon his golden words,

But I

Thought him a fool.

I'd rather talk with tinkers by the road,

Or crazy Jane who has fine things to say,

Or with the old man scraping at the mud.

Thank God, my life was thrown into the moil

Of honest, sweaty things that turn the world.

Big ploughmen who take pride in furrowed fields,

Miners who pick the coal in cramping dark—

These told me of the joy that follows work,

Muscles at ease, and food, and twilit roads,

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Talk, arm-linked with a girl.

I loved the keen-eyed men with shapely hands  
Skilled to control the working of machines. ;  
The only poems that they knew were wheels  
Which in their whirling makes a rhythmic song.  
One in his eager youth had been at sea  
And faced the blizzards of Cape Horn four times.  
He looked with fearless eyes on lesser things.

I liked that man.

I've known old soldiers who could wile the time  
With talk of India, Egypt, and the veldt.  
And all their speech was savoured with the salt  
Of seas and windy spaces and the sun ;  
Their stories wove for me a tapestry  
Of troops and cavalry and baggage mules,  
Of gilded temples, gleaming minarets,  
Black fighting men and steely, subtle guns—  
When shall this Ireland see their like again ?  
Those Dublins, Munsters, Connaughts and the rest.  
I have a heart for jockeys !  
In their eyes I've seen the racecourse  
Curving to the straight ;  
The hurdles and the dyke, the crowded stand,  
The cheating mob of gaitered, crafty men ;



*I MET A POET*

The kind-eyed horses slowly pacing round  
The paddock, led by wizened, bow-legged boys.

Some men I knew drove trams, they cracked good  
jokes,

For traffic is a jolly pilgrimage.

And some made boots,

And some kept shops.

I thought—"These men

Hold up the pillars of the world for us,

Or how could poets warm their chilly feet

And buy their velvet coats and feed themselves?

What if these only read the daily news

And smoke their pipes and love to play at

'House',

Without these men the poets could not sing."

I met a poet.

But in hating him

I may have been a fool.

Perhaps he was a man beneath that hat,

Like other men he might have rowed a boat

Or stoked a furnace if he had a chance.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

He might, for all I know, have kept a shop  
And sliced up bacon, witty at his work,  
Or climbed a ladder, hod upon his back.   :  
I may have under-rated him—God knows.

## FAITH OF A DOG

GRANT me the faith of a dog,

Master of mine.

Faith to follow and die

With never a reason why—

Seeking from him no sign.

Content that his lord knows best

Though pitiless his behest.

Grant me the hope of a dog,

Master of mine.

Hope of the deep heart's core

To wait at a fast-closed door.

Not to whimper or whine,

So sure that the door closed fast

Will open to him at last.

Grant me the love of a dog,

Master of mine.

*MORE SONGS FROM LEINSTER*

Love which in sore distress  
Finds in his lord's caress  
Comfort he counts divine.  
Asking no Heaven but this  
To love and serve for his bliss.

## LAUGHTER IS WISDOM

A WISE man said to me,  
    “ Laugh first at life, for life  
Will laugh at you,” said he.  
    “ Tears may be sweet  
But laughter is the best—  
    Come walk with lightsome feet,  
Take trouble as a jest,  
    Laugh first and last,” said he.

I held his wisdom in my mind,  
    Though it was bitter-tanged as rue.  
When life is crabbèd and unkind  
    Laughter is best. So true  
You spoke that now I find  
    I laugh, wise man, at you.









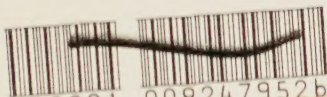




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*MORE SONGS  
FROM LEINSTER*



*BY*  
*W. M. LETTS*